



giving
nature
a home

RSPB Aylesbeare Common Reserve October 2014 newsletter

The rains have come, there is a nip in the air and the leaves have started turning...oh no, they haven't. A bit of an odd one this year: the leaves seem to be going straight from green to on-the-ground rather than giving us a particularly amazing colour display. I haven't really bottomed this out, because the received wisdom is that trees respond to reduced day-length by withdrawing the green chlorophyll from their leaves to reveal the other pigments, while some sugars trapped in the leaves as photosynthesis stops also make the strong reds and purples. But that would mean we should have the same vivid autumn, display bang on time, every year. But we don't, so I think the dear old British weather must have a part to play, most notably the warm, dry September we have just had.

Because of that warmth various dragonflies and butterflies have stayed on the wing, southern hawkers and common darters, plus red admirals and peacock butterflies. Richard saw a big southern hawker dragonfly catch a speckled wood butterfly, after inspecting it carefully to decide where it could get a grip amongst those fluttery wings.

Young buzzards have very much been in evidence: being "weaned" by their parents and not liking it much, so protesting loudly. But this is a quiet time of year for birds generally on the heaths. The tit flocks are beginning to increase in numbers, building up to the big winter groups, drawn in now by seed heads such as thistles and teasels.

The yellow dandelion-type flowers are very much in evidence at this time of year, hawkbits and sow thistles, along with ivy and the last few heather flowers they provide a late nectar source for bees and hoverflies.

September was a month of harvesting and tidying up and gearing up for the busy winter work session. Tree safety works had to be done following some powerful storms of wind, to clear hanging broken limbs near paths. The last butterfly surveys were carried out on sunny days. Hay was cut and stacked in fields next to the reserve. Logs were moved off site, felled last winter they will be stacked in our workyard for another year to season fully before being cut and split for firewood. Meanwhile, previously stacked wood is going through the log-processor ready to meet this winters' demands for fuel.

After the success of last year we borrowed the mobile apple press from East Devon District Council again for one of our volunteer days. Everyone brought along their windfalls for processing into delicious juice to take home again, but some remained with us and is now bubbling gently beside the stove, turning into a heady brew of cider.

And finally, don't forget your garden birds! Time to dust off those feeders that have been in the shed all summer and spruce up the bird table get them stocked for the winter visitors.